of rural entrepreneurship and transfer of technology for processing of food products by utilizing locally grown raw materials and providng 'hands on' experience at such production cum training centers. The EDP is intended to enable the prospective entrepreneurs to undergo training to establish commercially viable enterprises in food and agri processing sector. In the Eleventh Plan, EDP and the FPTC Programmes will be implemented by integrating them into a synergic module in order to achieve better results.

Food processing and testing laboratories

1711. SHRI-N.R. GOVINDARAJAR: Will the Minister of FOOD PROCESSING INDUSTRIES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has invited European Union countries and United States, to set up food testing laboratories jointly;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the number of MNCs that have come forward to set up laboratories; and

(d) the criteria being followed for providing grants to private companies, non-Government bodies or MNCs for setting up food processing and testing laboratories?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF FOOD PROCESSING INDUSTRIES (SHRI SUBODH KANT SAHAY): (a) to (d) In order to up-grade the existing food testing infrastructure in the country, one of the thrust areas for discussions with various countries including United States (US) and European Union (EU) has been on the possibilities of benchmarking/certifying food testing laboratories in India by these countries, to facilitate the food processing industries/exporters of food products to adhere to required standards of importing countries, so that the consignments of food products are accepted by those countries.

MFPI had been providing financial assistance under its Tenth Plan Scheme to Central/ State Government organizations, IITs, Universities and private sectors organisations for setting up/up-gradation of food testing laboratories in order to meet domestic as well as international standards of food products. Central/State Government organisations, IITs and Universities are eligible for grant-in-aid amounting to entire cost of the capital equipments required for setting up/up-gradation of laboratories. All other implementing agencies such as non-Government Bodies and private sector organisations are eligible for grant-in-aid limited to 33% of the cost of capital equipments required for setting up/up-gradation of such laboratories for general areas and 50% for difficult areas. The food testing facilities created with the financial assistance of MFPI are treated as common facilities for the use of food processing units in and around the area.

As per guidelines of this Ministry, complete proposals are to be recommended by the State Governments/Union Territories if they are received from private sector organisations or non-Government Bodies including MNCs for setting up/up-gradation of food testing laboratories. These proposals are examined and considered for approval of financial assistance, based on specific requirements such as quality parameters being tested, laboratory equipments required to test these parameters, testing requirements of the food processing industries and other stakeholders in and around the area and the capabilities of the applicant to manage the laboratory.